



British Civilization
Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century England
For Third-Year Students



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جامعة كفر الشيخ
كلية الآداب
قسم اللغة الإنجليزية
برنامج اللغة الإنجليزية



رؤية البرنامج:

أن يكون برنامجًا متميزًا ورائدًا في مجال اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها محليًا ودوليًا

The Vision of the program

A highly distinguished and leading program in the field of English language and literature on the local and international levels.

رسالة البرنامج:

يلتزم برنامج اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية الآداب جامعة كفر الشيخ بإعداد خريج طبقًا للمعايير القومية الأكاديمية المرجعية في مجال اللغة الإنجليزية وآدابها للمنافسة في سوق العمل وقادرًا على إجراء البحوث العلمية لخدمة المجتمع وتنمية البيئة في إطار من القيم والأخلاق.

The mission of the program

The program of English language and literature adheres to National Academic Reference Standards in the field of English language and literature which enable its graduates for competition in the labor market and publishing international researches for serving the society and developing the environment within the framework of elevated values.

Preface

Civilization studies provide an in-depth examination of the development and accomplishments of one of the world's great civilizations through direct encounters with significant and exemplary documents and monuments. These sequences complement the literary and philosophical study of texts central to the humanities sequences, as well as the study of synchronous social theories that shape basic questions in the social science sequences. Their approach stresses the grounding of events and ideas in historical context and the interplay of events, institutions, ideas, and cultural expressions in social change. The courses emphasize texts rather than surveys as a way of getting at the ideas, cultural patterns, and social pressures that frame the understanding of events and institutions within a civilization. And they seek to explore a civilization as an integrated entity, capable of developing and evolving meanings that inform the lives of its citizens.

This course is designed primarily for third-year students and its main focus is providing them with a bird's eye view of the British civilization during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The present course, thus, aims to give students an insight into the intellectual life of what is known as *Neoclassical age* and *Romantic Age* respectively via studying its most influential literary, intellectual and cultural figures that have shaped the British civilization.

There will be a combination of lectures and in-class discussions of assigned readings. Short writing assignments and quizzes will be given out in class from time to time. Students are expected to participate in discussion and encouraged to ask questions and give comments on the readings when appropriate. The students are also required by the end of the course to draw an analogy/a contrast between the two allocated periods and read critically some excerpts standing for the two periods.

The main objectives for this course:

- The first is to provide students with a body of knowledge about some general key concepts. This knowledge is meant to be a background for your education and professional life.
- The second objective is to help you become better writers, by asking you to identify problems, analyse materials, evaluate options, and make your own arguments and conclusions. This objective will be achieved via in-class short writing assignments and written exam dissertations.
- The third objective is to encourage you to think critically. Civilisation and history are more than a compilation of facts. A historian does not only describe and tell stories of the past as they were recorded. The interpretation often influences the finished product. To understand the world, you need to know history, have your

own interpretation of it and develop critical thinking skills decisive in shaping your future.

Course Structure:

Part I: The Neoclassical Period.

Part II: The Romantic Period.

Part III: The Course Questions

Part IV: Excerpts

Part I

The Neoclassical Period



Chapter 1

The Jacobean and the Caroline Eras

Introduction:

STUART (ALSO STEWART)

*The family name of the line of monarchs – ‘the Stuarts’ – who occupied the British throne from the accession of [King James I](#) in 1603 to the deposition and execution of [King Charles I](#) in 1649; and from the **Restoration*** of [King Charles II](#) in 1660 to the death of Queen [Anne](#) in 1714. The ‘missing’ period between 1649 and 1660 is the **Interregnum***, during which Great Britain was governed first as a **Commonwealth*** under Parliament and then as a **Protectorate*** under [Oliver Cromwell](#). The Stuarts, in fact, were monarchs of Scotland from 1371 to 1714, and on the death of [Elizabeth I](#) without an heir, her cousin, the then [James VI of Scotland](#), acceded to the English throne as [James I of England](#) [see also **Jacobean***]. James, the son of [Mary](#), Queen of [Scots](#), who had become King of Scotland on his mother’s forced abdication in 1567, and who made only token protest at her execution in 1587 [see **Elizabethan***], was a staunch Protestant whose claim to the throne, accepted by both Elizabeth and Parliament, derived from the marriage of James IV of Scotland to [Margaret Tudor](#), daughter of [Henry VII](#) of England. James’s joint monarchy effectively brought about the union of England and Scotland, and in 1604, he was declared king of ‘Great Britain, France and Ireland’ – the reference to France by this point being anachronistic wishful thinking. [It is from this point, then, that the present volume will normally use ‘Great Britain’/‘British’ and not ‘English’ when referring to historical and cultural events – except where the latter term is specifically correct. After 1800, when the Act of Union united the Parliaments of Great Britain and Ireland to form ‘The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland’, ‘UK’ will tend to be substituted for ‘British/Britain’.]*

1. JACOBEEAN (1603–1625)



*Derived from the Latin for James, 'Jacobus', the adjective 'Jacobean' is used solely to identify the period of the reign of King James I of England, Scotland and Ireland, 1603–25 [see **Stuart*** above], and the literature, architecture, furniture and style of decoration produced during it. James was a devout but not extreme Protestant, and did much to establish his religion as the national one (he played a central role in organising a new standardised translation of the Bible: the 'Authorised Version' or '[King James Bible](#)' of 1611). However, his religious beliefs brought him into serious conflict with both Catholics and Puritans, while his dogmatic insistence on the Divine Right of Kings caused him to clash bitterly with Parliament, and especially a House of Commons which was developing a growing sense of independence. James himself was a scholar who wrote learned treatises on several subjects, and was a strong supporter of the arts, especially the theatre (Shakespeare's company was called the 'King's Men', and it is possible that James saw an early production of Shakespeare's topical tragedy, [Macbeth](#), in 1606). The combination of intellectual talent and stubborn personality led to him being dubbed 'the wisest fool in Christendom'.*

Religion

The continuing religious strife between Catholics and Protestants, and the rapidly growing power of [the Puritans](#), especially in Parliament ([the Gunpowder Plot](#) in 1605 is the most famous event in this narrative, which led to severe persecution of Catholics).

Government

The increasingly divisive tensions between King and Parliament, initially instigated by dislike in some quarters for James's scheme for the 'perfect union' of England and Scotland, and by his hostility to [Puritanism](#) at the Hampton Court Conference (1604) – this being compounded by his dubious financial devices (sale of monopolies and titles, royal duties levied at ports); his ambivalent relationship with Spain; and resentment at his reliance on favourites (especially the Duke of Buckingham).

Naval Expansion and Colonisation

The continuing development of British maritime power, its underpinning of national mercantile interests abroad (e.g. those of the East India Company), and the resulting conflicts with the Dutch in particular; the colonisation of the east coast of North America,

and the sailing of the Pilgrim Fathers to 'New England' in 1620; the authorised 'plantation' of confiscated Irish land, especially in Ulster, by English and Scottish settlers.

Social and Economic Events

The incidence of plague in London, which had the effect of frequently closing the proliferating theatres there; the continuing foundation of schools and university colleges, and the rise of 'Jacobean' architectural design for houses and public buildings (Inigo Jones, as Surveyor of the King's Works, built the Queen's House, Greenwich, and the new Palace of Whitehall).

Theatre

It is not fortuitous that the commonest present-day use of the word 'Jacobean' is in the phrase 'Jacobean Drama', for it was during James's reign that many of the most famous tragedies and comedies in English were written and first performed (e.g. by Shakespeare, Jonson, Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher, Middleton, Massinger and Ford).

2. CAROLINE (1625-49)



The adjective 'Caroline' (less frequently 'Carolean') is derived from the Latin for Charles, 'Carolus', and is used to describe the period of the reign of King Charles I of England, Scotland and Ireland, 1625-49. 'Caroline' is occasionally also applied to the reign of King Charles II, 1660-85, but **The Restoration*** is now the conventionally accepted term for this period. Unlike 'Jacobean', 'Caroline' is far less commonly used either as a period descriptor or for the literature and other arts of the time, perhaps because there is not a substantive body of work with enough characteristics in common to have given the word equal currency. The verse of the so-called '**Cavalier Poets**' ([Herrick](#), [Cowley](#), [Suckling](#), [Lovelace](#), [Waller](#), [Denham](#)), however, is the most coherent corpus of work to be properly called 'Caroline', but it is worth remembering that Donne died six years into Charles's reign and that his poems were first published only in 1633; that the devotional '**Metaphysical Poets**' (Crashaw, Vaughan, Herbert, Traherne) were writing in this period; and that the writing careers of **Milton and Marvell straddled the Interregnum***. James I bequeathed to his son Charles a situation marked by hostility between Crown and Parliament, one Charles immediately compounded by marrying the Catholic French princess, Henrietta Maria, only a matter of weeks after his accession to the throne. Her influence on the king was abhorred by Parliament, and by 1642, just before the Civil War

started, she was herself in danger of impeachment. Like his father, Charles was talented, autocratic and a firm believer in [the Divine Right of Kings](#); he also indulged the same favourite, Buckingham, until the latter's assassination in 1628. In addition, Charles promoted the High Church Anglicanism of Archbishop Laud, which was anathema to an extreme Protestant Parliament; but it was the king's penurious financial situation and the strategies he then deployed to raise money without accountability which produced the most persistent, and ultimately terminal, conflict with the Commons. It is clear from the timelines that the dominant narrative of this period is the one flagged in the previous paragraph: Charles's dissolution of three Parliaments between 1625 and 1629, and his collection of revenues without consent; his acceptance under duress of the Petition of Right in 1628; his 11 years of 'personal rule' without Parliament (1629–40), using the Earl of Strafford (Thomas Wentworth) and the Courts of the Star Chamber and High Commission to enforce his government in the kingdom; his imposition of the hated 'Ship Money' tax on maritime and then inland counties, which resulted in the John Hampden trial; the necessity of recalling Parliament in 1640 under threat of a Scottish invasion [see below], first as the 'Short Parliament' and then as the 'Long Parliament' (which outlasted Charles himself); the execution by the 'Long Parliament' of Strafford and Laud, and the drawing up of the 'Grand Remonstrance' (1641) by John Pym and other leaders of the resistance to the king; Charles's failed attempt in early 1642 to arrest the 'Five Members' responsible for the document; his raising of his standard at Nottingham, the commencement of the **English Civil War***, and Charles's ultimate defeat, imprisonment, trial and execution.

3. THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

*Although England had been ravaged by civil war in the past – most especially by the Wars of the Roses (1455–85; see **Tudor***) – the term 'The English Civil War' (aka 'The Great Rebellion') refers exclusively to [the struggle between Parliament and King Charles I](#) (then his son, Charles Stuart – later King Charles II) from [1642 to 1651](#). The English Civil War was caused principally by Puritan and emerging middle-class opposition to the king's claims to rule by divine right and the Long Parliament's consequent attempts to curb royal policy by withholding resources from him. The country was divided between the 'Royalist' or 'Cavalier' interest and the 'Parliamentarians' or 'Roundheads' (Puritans tended to have their hair cut short, unlike the Cavaliers' flowing locks). The king raised his standard at Nottingham in 1642, and the Civil War began. The detailed course of the war can be followed in the timeline tables (including those at the beginning of Chapter 2), but key moments are: Parliament's covenant with the Scots (1643); the calling of the Royalist Parliament at Oxford (1644); Charles's flight from Oxford and surrender to the Scots (1646; end of '1st Civil War'); the king's signing of an 'Engagement' with the Scots (1647); their subsequent invasion of England on the king's behalf and defeat at Preston (1648; end of '2nd Civil War'); the trial and beheading of Charles I (1649), and the declaration of England as a 'Free Commonwealth*'; the proclamation of Charles Stuart as king in Edinburgh (1649); a further Scottish Royalist invasion of England, and its defeat*

at the Battle of Worcester (1651). Charles Stuart fled to France, and the period of the Interregnum* begins.

Religion

Attempts by Charles and Laud to anglicise the Presbyterian Scottish Kirk, leading to serious rebellions, the 'Bishops' Wars' of 1639–40, and the threat of a Scottish invasion which forced the king to recall Parliament in 1640 [see above]; further Irish Catholic rebellions in the 1640s, and in 1649, the invasion of Ireland by Oliver Cromwell.

Colonisation

The expansion of British colonisation of North America, including parts of what was to become Canada; expansion of British trading activity in India and then China, and continuing conflict with the Dutch and French over areas of influence for trade and for colonisation.

Science

The start of the draining of the Fens in the eastern counties of England by Dutch engineers the continuation of scientific development (Sir William Harvey proved the circulation of the blood in 1628), with the seeds of the establishment of the Royal Society (1662) sown during this period.

Law

Censorship by Crown and Parliament featured throughout the period, but so too did the beginnngs of copyright.

Theatre

The drama continued to flourish – although many of the major Jacobean names had disappeared by the 1630s – until the theatres were closed by the Puritans in 1642 (reopened at The Restoration* in 1660).

Chapter 2

1650–1699

Commonwealth and Restoration

INTRODUCTION

This chapter covers a relatively short period of time, but one which is highly eventful in British history (e.g. the curtailing of royal power, the rise in importance of Parliament, the appearance of the British party political system [**Whigs*** and **Tories***]). Following **The English Civil War*** and the execution of Charles I in 1649 is the period of 11 years known as the **Interregnum***. This includes the republican **Commonwealth***, which rapidly transmutes into the **Protectorate*** of Oliver Cromwell. After Cromwell's death in 1658 and the failure of his son's short-lived regime, the **Stuart*** monarchy is restored to the throne in 1660 with King Charles II (**The Restoration***). Charles's death in 1685 leads to the accession of his Roman Catholic brother, James II, and **The Glorious Revolution** of 1688 which deposed him and established the Protestant succession of William and Mary. The period also witnesses the beginnings of the **Neo-Classical*** or **Augustan*** movement in literature and the arts.

2.1 INTERREGNUM (1649-1660)

From the Latin 'inter' (between) and 'regnum' (rule or reign), literally: 'between two reigns'. Although used more generally to define any period between two governments, the term in British history applies specifically to the period between the execution of Charles I in 1649 [under **Stuart*** and **Caroline***] and **The Restoration*** of the monarchy in 1660 under Charles II. This 11-year period is also commonly referred to as that of *The English Revolution*, when Britain was governed first as a **Commonwealth*** and then as a **Protectorate***.

2.2 COMMONWEALTH

A 16th-Century word (originally 'commonweal') meaning the general or public good and echoing the Latin 'res publica', from which the notion of a 'republic' derives. Commonwealth with an upper-case 'C' is used to define the nature of the British state during the **Interregnum*** [see above]: the republican Commonwealth of which Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector [see **Protectorate*** below]. While generally understood as covering the whole 11-year period, it refers more specifically to the period between 1649 (after the execution of Charles I) when Britain was declared 'a Commonwealth and free state by the supreme authority of this nation, the representatives of the people in parliament', with Cromwell as chair of the Council of State, and 1653 when the 'Rump' of the 'Long Parliament' (i.e. the remaining Commons) was forcibly dissolved by Cromwell. It is characterised by Parliament's abolition of the monarchy and House of Lords (the Anglican Church had effectively already been dismantled in 1646); Cromwell's brutal

suppression of rebellion in Ireland, and the confiscation from 1652 onwards of Irish lands; the crushing by Cromwell of the Scots under Charles Stuart (already proclaimed King of Scotland; King Charles II to be); continuing conflicts with the Dutch over trade and British claims to sovereignty of British seas; and the height of activities by the radical dissenting groups, **The Fifth Monarchists, Ranters, Levellers and Diggers***.

2.3 PROTECTORATE

'Protectorate' is the noun applying to a region or period when the office of Protector of a kingdom or state is instituted. In 1653, Cromwell dissolved both the 'Rump' Parliament and the Puritan Convention he had summoned (nicknamed the 'Barebones Parliament' [see timeline table for explanation of this]). The council of army officers then appointed him Lord Protector of the Commonwealth under a new constitution, the 'Instrument of Government' (Britain's only written constitution), which was to create a balance between Army and Parliament. Under Cromwell's dictatorship (he ruled by decree and ordinance), the Union of England, Scotland and Ireland was recognised in the representation of MPs from all three countries in the first Protectorate Parliament; peace was made with Holland, commercial and/or treaties of friendship signed with Portugal, Sweden, Denmark and France, and in alliance with France, Spain defeated on sea and land; the Anglican Church was reorganised and Puritanism established, but Cromwell upheld religious tolerance; there were a number of Royalist risings against Cromwell and his relations with Parliament were continuously strained, but when offered the title of king in 1657, he refused it. He died in 1658, and his son, Richard, succeeded him as Lord Protector; but within months, Richard Cromwell, in conflict with the Army, had resigned, and the way was open for the restoration of the monarchy under Charles Stuart as Charles II.

2.4 FIFTH MONARCHISTS, RANTERS, LEVELLERS AND DIGGERS

These are all names of dissenting Puritan sects during The English Revolution, whose activities and publications concerning both religious and political freedom were so radical that Cromwell and his government had to suppress them. The Fifth Monarchy Men were a fanatical millenarian group during the Commonwealth who advocated forcibly establishing Christ's kingdom on earth as the last of the five monarchies prophesied in the Book of Daniel. Their rebellion in 1653, as Cromwell became Lord Protector, was rapidly put down. The Ranters were an antinomian sect during the same period who believed that Christians were justified by faith alone and were absolved by the gospel from the obligation to obey the moral law. The Levellers (the name has both religious – Christ the 'Great Leveller' – and constitutional connotations), who saw the execution of Charles I as finally ending the line of descent from the Norman Conquest, and hence the oppression of a Norman aristocracy and feudal system, promoted notions of a return to native liberties and a root-and-branch reform of English society.*

In the second half of the 1640s, the Leveller's rigorous defence of the freedom of the press as a defence against tyranny (e.g. the pamphlet, *England's Birth-Right Justified*, attributed

to John Lilburne; see below) had caused their religious and political ideas to spread widely throughout the Army, culminating in a series of debates at Putney in the autumn of 1647. Their documents, *England's Misery and Remedy* (1645) and *An Agreement of the People for a firme and present Peace, upon grounds of common right* (1647–9), written in plain and forceful English, began to foster radical ideas amongst the common people about a popular sovereignty which could create a society based on equality. The latter pamphlet, for example, propounded wide-ranging parliamentary and executive reform, the need to protect the 'native rights' of the 'Free-born People of England', and the enfranchising of all male commoners by abandoning the property qualification to vote. This was not at all what Cromwell's largely land-owning generals had in mind. A prominent Leveller in the late-1640s and 1650s was John Lilburne, who had been imprisoned and otherwise punished by Charles I's Star Chamber on several occasions for distributing Puritan literature, and who was then imprisoned for publishing attacks on Cromwell's government as too aristocratic and for failing to protect the ancient rights and liberties of the English people. *The Diggers*, or *True Levellers* as they regarded themselves, were a sect who, in the spring of 1649, took Leveller notions of individual freedom and equality in religious and social matters to their logical conclusion by setting up a co-operative community on former royal land at St George's Hill in Surrey. This they began to cultivate (hence 'Diggers'), claiming they were taking back land originally stolen from the English common people by Charles I's Norman forebears. This again was deeply disturbing, even for Parliamentary land-owners, and the sect was forced to defend itself later the same year in front of the ruling generals. One of the most prominent Diggers, Gerrard Winstanley, was central to this defence with his pamphlet, *A New-Yeares Gift Sent to the Parliament and Armie* (1649), which, in the rhetorical language of Christian communism, accused the government of perpetuating the monarchical system and failing to establish Christ's Kingdom on English soil as a second Eden. However, by the mid-1650s, the Diggers, along with other radical sectarian movements, had largely been suppressed, although something of the Digger ideology can be seen to inform James Harrington's influential republican utopia, *The Common-Wealth of Oceana* (1656), and their egalitarian and libertarian thinking on behalf of 'the free-born Englishman' became a point of reference for later radicals in the English political tradition.

2.5 STUART [continued]

The family name of the line of monarchs – The Stuarts – who occupied the British throne from the accession of King James I in 1603 to the deposition and execution of King Charles I in 1649; and from the Restoration of King Charles II in 1660 to the death of Queen Anne in 1714. The Stuart line was restored to the throne in 1660 with Charles II [for more detail, see 2.7 **Restoration***]. Because his marriage remained childless, his brother, James, Duke of York, succeeded to the throne on Charles's death in 1685. **King James II** was a declared Roman Catholic who had also married a Catholic, and his undisguised attempts to return Britain to Catholicism led to *The Glorious (or 'Bloodless') Revolution of 1688*. When James fled to France, Mary, James's Protestant daughter, with her Dutch Protestant husband, William of Orange, were summoned back to Britain to become joint monarchs, **William**

III and Mary II, in 1689 (the royal House until William's death in 1702 is described as that of 'Stuart and Orange'). The marriage was again childless; Mary died in 1694, and William in 1702. A year earlier, Parliament had passed the Act of Settlement which ensured that only a Protestant could accede to the British throne, amongst other constitutional constraints on the royal prerogative. On William's death, the staunchly Protestant Anne, Mary II's sister, all of whose children had died very young, became queen. Anne had accepted the Act of Settlement which meant that when she died in **1714**, the succession automatically went to George of Hanover, Anne's nearest Protestant cousin, who became George I of Great Britain [**Hanoverian***].

2.6 JACOBITE

*'Jacobus' is Latin for James, but 'Jacobite' should not be confused with Jacobean [see Chapter 1] or with Jacobin.*¹ After the deposition of James II in 1688, his death in exile in 1701, and the deaths without issue of William and Mary, the Jacobites – supporters of his line of succession – claimed the right to the throne for his son, James Francis Edward Stuart (the 'Old Pretender'), who made a failed expedition to Scotland from France in 1708. After the death without heir of Queen Anne in 1714 – when the British throne passed to the house of Hanover [see above and **Hanoverian**] – further attempts were made to incite rebellion in Scotland (and Ireland), the most significant being in 1715. This process was continued by the 'Old Pretender's' son, Charles Edward Stuart (the 'Young Pretender', aka 'Bonnie Prince Charlie'), who led the rebellion in 1745 known as 'the '45' which was crushed by George I's army at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. This effectively spelt the end of the Stuart claim to the British throne (the male line became extinct in 1807).

2.7 (THE) RESTORATION

With the direct article, the noun defines the period in British history from the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 when Charles II regained the throne, following the Interregnum of the Commonwealth* and Cromwellian Protectorate*, until his death in 1685.* Charles II married Catherine of Braganza in 1662, but the union remained childless. Much of his reign was therefore bedevilled by questions of the succession to the throne on his death without heir, which would pass to his Catholic brother, James, and which therefore acted as a focus for continuing religious strife in the country. Charles was a cunning politician who never clarified his own religious beliefs (although indicatively tolerant of Roman Catholics; see, for example, his attempts to introduce 'Declarations of Indulgence' in 1662 and 1672), but he was constantly at odds with Parliament over its attempts at severe repression of religious dissenters. The Great Fire of London (1666 – widely held at the time to be the result of a Catholic plot), unsuccessful wars with Protestant Holland, and dubious dealings with the increasingly powerful Louis XIV of Catholic France (including the sale of Dunkirk for £400,000 in 1662) caused intense Protestant hostility and anti-Catholic feeling. The future James II married a Catholic in 1673, and Charles tried

¹ <http://www.andreazuvich.com/history/jacobean-jacobites-and-jacobins/>

unsuccessfully to introduce a Declaration of Indulgence (1672) which would annul the penal laws against Catholics and other dissenters. In return, Parliament passed the Test Act, which prohibited Roman Catholics from sitting in Parliament or holding government office, and made repeated attempts to pass a bill preventing James from acceding to the throne (the 'Exclusion Crisis' of the 1670s and early 1680s). In 1678, anti-Catholic sentiment reached boiling-point with the 'Popish Plot' to kill the king, spuriously revealed by Titus Oates and exploited by the Earl of Shaftesbury [see **Whigs*** below]. For three years, the Stuart monarchy seemed doomed, and the crisis helped to create the political party divisions between **Whigs*** (favouring James's exclusion) and **Tories*** (refusing to alter the succession) [see below for these terms]. From 1681, Charles ruled without Parliament, and despite another unmasked conspiracy to kill him and James (the Rye House Plot, 1683), which intensified the repression of dissenters, the king died in his bed in 1685 with the succession intact. The period of The Restoration* is often extended to include the reign of King James II (1685–88). 1685 saw the Duke of Monmouth's abortive rebellion in the West Country against James's accession, the 'Bloody Assize' of Judge Jeffries which followed it, and James's use of royal prerogative to overrule Parliament and introduce pro-Catholic policies. 1688, the year of the 'Glorious Revolution', therefore witnessed the forced removal of James and the riotous welcome to, and joint accession to the throne of, the securely Protestant monarchs, William III (Prince of Orange, Holland) and Mary II (James's daughter and Charles II's niece). With French aid, James's **Jacobite*** supporters held out in Scotland and Ireland, where French and Catholic Irish troops were besieging Londonderry, but William of Orange's Protestant army defeated them in Scotland in 1689, was victorious at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 (with repercussions which are still being felt today), and forced the surrender of Limerick in 1691. This was effectively the end of Jacobite resistance [but see Jacobite* above]. William was now free to return to the continental war between Louis XIV's France and the League of Augsburg (the 'Grand Alliance') which Britain had joined in 1689. This was concluded by the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697, when Louis XIV recognized William as King of Great Britain, but the anti-French alliance (especially with the German House of **Hanover*** was renewed in 1701 at the start of what became the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–14). The 1689–97 war caused the introduction of a system of National Debt and other significant financial developments [see 'Government and Finance' below], and the settlement between King and Parliament of 1689–9 saw control of the nation's standing army now vested in Parliament.

Key Timeline Narratives 1660–1699

Naval, Trade and Colonial Expansion

The assumption of absolute power in France by King Louis XIV in 1661, and his expansionist policies in Europe and the rest of the world, which produced resentment and fear in Britain; but at the same time Charles II's secret pro-French sympathies and negotiations with the French king; and the rapid development of British sea power in this period, with Parliament willing to grant funds to support the navy and new shipyards built at Sheerness and Devonport. Related to this is Britain's mercantile and colonial

expansion, especially in North America and India (the East India Company, for example, founded Calcutta in 1690), but also in Africa (trading in gold, ivory and slaves), which led to conflicts with the French and Dutch in particular (there were Anglo- Dutch naval wars for much of the 1660s and again in 1672–4 over maritime power and trade); and the founding throughout the period of new British colonies on the eastern seaboard of North America (e.g. North and South Carolina, the seizing of New Amsterdam [New York] from the Dutch, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania and the establishing of Philadelphia); but also, by the early 1680s, of a French colonial empire there which stretched from Louisiana in the south to Quebec in the north.

Government and Finance

Throughout the period, further extreme tensions between king and Parliament resulted from the former's chronic shortage of money and the latter's resistance to voting him funds, especially without the right to scrutinise public spending. But towards the end of the period, under William III, a system of National Debt had been put in place (1693); the Bank of England was founded (1694), as was the Bank of Scotland (1695); financial reforms were introduced (overseen by Sir Isaac Newton and John Locke, who became Master of the Mint in 1696); the Royal Board of Trade was established (with Locke as one of its commissioners); and Lloyds' coffee-house became the headquarters of marine insurance (1692). Such financial innovations were central to the stabilising of the British economy and to the expansion of Britain's mercantile activities at home and abroad.

Law

As noted earlier, both Stuart monarchs and Parliamentarians had used censorship to control opposition, and this remained a feature of The Restoration, too, with Licensing Acts in 1662 and 1685 introducing [strict pre-printing censorship](#) for all English publications. However, the lapsing of this Act in 1695 laid the foundations for the freedom of the press in Britain.

Cultural Developments

Two of the best-known disasters of the early part of the period were [the Great Plague of London in 1665](#) and [the Great Fire of London](#) the following year. However, as a result, Sir Christopher Wren was appointed 'Surveyor-General and principal architect' for the rebuilding of the capital city. Wren's architectural work in London and elsewhere (including St Paul's Cathedral, parts of Westminster Abbey, Buckingham House and Marlborough House) is one of the great cultural achievements of the age. But so, too, are the founding of the Royal Society (1662) and of the Clarendon Press, Oxford (1672); the mathematical and scientific work of Sir Isaac Newton and Edmund Halley; the philosophical writings of John Locke; the diaries of John Evelyn and Samuel Pepys; the carving of Grinling Gibbons; the music of Henry Purcell; and the paintings of Sir Peter Lely and Sir Godfrey Kneller.

Literature and Theatre

The commonest usage of the adjective 'Restoration' in literary studies is in '[Restoration Comedy](#)', the drama which followed Charles's reopening of the theatres in 1660 – a bawdy but urbane reaction to the austere morality of the preceding Puritan culture. The problems of strict periodisation can be appreciated, however, if we note that one of the most admired Restoration Comedies is [William Congreve's *The Way of the World*](#), first produced in 1700, and that George Farquhar's cognate comedies, [The Recruiting Officer](#) and [The Beaux Strategem](#), date from 1706 and 1707 respectively. It is worth remembering, too, that other examples of 'Restoration literature' include [John Milton's epic poems](#), Andrew Marvell's poetry, the prose of [John Bunyan](#), the many plays and novels of the prolific woman writer, [Aphra Behn](#), and the extraordinary flowering of drama by [women playwrights](#) which continues into the 18th Century. Finally, there are the plays and poems of [John Dryden](#), who is usually regarded as the harbinger of the **Augustan*** period in his deployment of **Neo-Classical*** forms and genres, and who therefore also indicates the impossibility of precise [periodisation](#) (he died in 1700). In this context, too, we might register that the French poet and critic, [Nicolas Boileau](#), published his critical essay, *L'Art poétique*, which outlines the principles of [French classicism](#), in 1674 – a work imitated by [Alexander Pope](#) in his poem, *An Essay on Criticism*, written in 1709 and published in 1711.

2.8 HABEAS CORPUS

Latin: literally, 'have the body [brought into court before a judge]'. In English and US law, this is a writ issued by a judge requiring an imprisoned person to be brought physically into court in order to state the reasons for, and examine the legality of, their detention. It was made enforceable by the Habeas Corpus Act of 1679 in England, and is guaranteed in the US Constitution. In both countries, the right of Habeas Corpus can only be suspended during a period of emergency.

2.9 WHIGS

Although its etymology remains doubtful, 'Whig' probably derives from the Scottish word 'whiggamore', a supporter in the 16th and 17th Centuries of the Covenanters, the Scottish Presbyterians who fought for the belief that the Church should be governed by elected elders rather than bishops, and more generally for civil and religious liberties [see 1643, for example, in the timelines]. Whig and Tory were the terms for the major British political parties for the next century and a half. By 1679, Whig was applied to the political group, led by the Earl of Shaftesbury, opposed to the succession of James, Duke of York, Charles II's brother, and more generally to those upholding popular rights and opposed to the king. The Whigs were instrumental in bringing about the 'Glorious Revolution'; were in power in Britain from 1714 to 1760, most notably under the ministry of Sir Robert Walpole (1721–42); were finally ousted by the Tories (1783–4) who held power until 1830 (many Whigs sided with the Tory Party during the French Revolution in defence of

the landed interest); they secured the passage of the Reform Bill of 1832 and other measures of reform; but by the late 1860s had merged with the new **Liberal*** Party. Unlike 'Tory', the word no longer has currency in present-day politics.

2.10 TORIES

Etymologically, 'Tory' is again uncertain. It probably derives from the Irish word 'toraidhe', 'outlaw', 'highwayman', and was originally used for dispossessed Irish people who lived as robbers and attacked English settlers. Tory also came to refer to marauders in the Scottish Highlands, and was then adopted around 1679 as a term of abuse for the political supporters of the succession of the future James II. After the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, the word gradually lost its abusive connotations and became the accepted name for the political party which supported the Anglican Church, the hereditary right to the throne, and the established political order. The Tories were briefly in power between 1710 and 1714, but their Jacobite sympathies and negotiations with the 'Old Pretender' [see under **Stuart (continued)*** in this chapter] discredited them, and they were out of power until the accession of King George III in 1760, when many of them joined the 'King's friends'. After being ousted by the Whigs in 1830, the party was refashioned by Sir Robert Peel, and during the 1830s became the **Conservative Party** [see gloss on **Conservatives and Liberals**]. The word is still in use as an informal term for the Conservatives.*

Chapter 3

1700–1789

The Augustan Period

INTRODUCTION

The problem of exact periodicity is sharply apparent in the present chapter. The first 14 years of this new 'period' are ruled by the last of the **Stuart*** line, while the **Hanoverian*** succession lasts from 1714, with the accession of King George I, to the death of Queen Victoria in 1901. However, because literary history tends to see Queen Anne's reign (1702–14) – if not the last two decades of the 17th Century – as part of the **Neo-Classical*** or **Augustan*** period, the start-date for this chapter goes back to 1700. Furthermore, modern historians often use the concept of the 'Long 18th Century' when dealing with the period under consideration, a period of political change and consolidation which stretches roughly from The Glorious Revolution of 1688 to the passing of the First Reform Bill in 1832. While this prevents the period being broken up into artificial/arbitrary segments, for the purposes of literary history it includes too diverse a range of movements and tendencies – although, as we shall see, there are also overlaps and continuities between the Augustan* and Romantic* movements. The chapter ends with the year of **The French Revolution** in 1789.

3.1 HANOVER / HANOVERIAN

*The family name of the line of monarchs – **The Hanoverians** – who occupied the British throne from the accession of King George I in 1714 to the death of Queen Victoria in 1901.* On the death of Queen Anne in 1714, the provisions of the Act of Settlement (1701) came into force [see Chapter 2, **Stuart (continued)***], and Anne's Protestant cousin, George Louis, Elector of Hanover (Germany), became George I of Great Britain. His descendants ruled both Hanover and Britain until the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837, when the two thrones were separated. Victoria married Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha in 1840, and on her death and the accession of King Edward VII in 1901, the name of the royal house was changed to 'Saxe-Coburg and Gotha'. The reigns of later Hanoverians will be glossed in subsequent chapters. Here, the reigns of King George I, King George II and part of the reign of King George III will be considered. Having divorced his wife in 1694 for adultery, George I brought no queen consort to Britain with him, and he never learnt English. The Hanoverian succession was deeply unpopular among sections of the public, and there were widespread demonstrations against the new king, who did little to court British favour. However, the unsuccessful **Jacobite*** uprising of 1715 [see Chapter 2, **Stuart (continued)***] strengthened Whig* [see Chapter 2] support for him, and the king's preference for the Whigs helped to give them a monopoly of power for the next 50 years. George's ignorance of English and his lack of attendance at Cabinet meetings, combined with the Septennial Act of 1716 which extended the life of a parliament for seven years, meant that government largely rested in the hands of the ruling Whig oligarchy, especially during Sir Robert Walpole's ministry (1721–42). This reduced popular participation in the political process, and increased constitutional control over the

Crown, whilst giving the so-called 'Court Party' unprecedented dominance over Parliament. By becoming both First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1721 (after the bursting of the 'South Sea Bubble' in 1720, the first great financial scandal of modern times), Walpole was effectively Britain's first 'Prime Minister'. On his father's death in 1727, George II became king. He had opposed George I's government, but rapidly found himself maintaining Walpole as the Chief Minister, until his first son, Frederick, Prince of Wales (d. 1751), became the centre of opposition to Walpole in the late 1730s and forced the latter's resignation (1742). George II was then obliged to accept William Pitt 'the Elder' (Earl of Chatham), leader of the younger 'patriotic' Whigs opposed to Walpole, to enter his government. Walpole's policy of peace with Britain's European neighbours was broken in 1739 by war with Spain and by the king's support for the Austrian cause in the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–8). George was the last British monarch to fight in battle – at Dettingen (1743) where he was victorious. In 1745, the most serious of the Jacobite* uprisings began when Charles Edward Stuart, the 'Young Pretender' [see Chapter 2, Stuart (continued)*], landed in Scotland and invaded England as far south as Derby before retreating back to Scotland. Without the expected assistance from France, the rising was doomed, and the Duke of Cumberland, George II's second son, brutally suppressed it at the Battle of Culloden Moor in 1746. George reluctantly made Pitt his first minister in 1756, who then took charge of the conduct of the Seven Years War (1756–63) in which Britain sided with Prussia (in defence of Hanover) against France and her allies (the North American dimension of this, the French and Indian War, had begun earlier in 1754). Reverses in Europe were offset by victories elsewhere: pre-eminently, Clive's victories in India (Plassey and Chinsura, 1757–8), which effectively began Britain's conquest of India; Wolfe's victory over the French to take Quebec in 1759, which consolidated British power in North America; and the Royal Navy's supremacy in maritime power by the same year. George died suddenly the following year, 1760. The eldest son of George II, Frederick, Prince of Wales, had predeceased his father by dying in 1751, hence Frederick's eldest son, George (1738–1820), succeeded his grandfather in 1760 as King George III of Great Britain and Elector of Hanover (then King, 1815–20). George was initially popular with his people, but he was keen to govern as well as reign, and in 1761, he forced William Pitt the Elder, whom he disliked, to resign over Pitt's conduct of the Seven Years War. A succession of first ministers followed, largely in post through the king's patronage, the one most to George's taste being Lord North, who was his chief minister from 1770–82 (when the American War of Independence ended [see below]). In effect, therefore, George III governed by personal rule for 20 years, in the process breaking the supremacy of the old Whig* [see Chapter 2] oligarchy. From 1765, with the imposition of Stamp Duty on the American colonies, then other forms of taxation which infuriated the colonists, and the inept handling of the situation during Lord North's administration (he was easily swayed by the king's views which saw the colonists simply as rebels), the process was underway that would lead to the American War of Independence (1775–83), the Declaration of Independence (1776), and the final recognition of the United States of America as fully independent of British rule at the Peace of Versailles (1783). The loss of the American colonies was deeply unpopular in

Britain, North resigned, and George III had to look elsewhere for his Prime Minister. After months of political upheaval in 1782–3, George compelled his existing ministers to resign, called on William Pitt ('the Younger') to form a ministry, and dissolved Parliament. At the general election in 1784, Pitt's **Tories*** won a large majority; at 24, Pitt became Britain's youngest Prime Minister; his ministry lasted for 17 years; and Whig* power was in abeyance until Earl Grey's reforming ministry was returned in 1830 (see Chapter 2 for Whigs and Tories). From 1784 onwards, George took a much less active role in politics and government (in 1788, he suffered his first attack of mental illness, Hanoverian (continued) I* and **(The) Regency***), allowing Pitt to introduce his own programme of policies. Despite fierce opposition from the liberal Whig, Charles James Fox, by the end of the period under consideration in this chapter (1789, and the start of *The French Revolution* – given more detailed treatment in the glosses to Chapter 4), Pitt had created a 'Sinking Fund' to reduce the National Debt; passed the Government of India Act in 1784, which effectively put the East India Company under government control; advocated reform of the slave trade; and attempted to reform Parliament [for the later years of Pitt's ministry and George III's reign].

Key Timeline Narratives 1700–1789

International Events

Other international issues involving Great Britain: from the 1700s onwards, the institutional promotion of the slave trade between Africa and the Americas, but by the late 1780s the beginnings of movements to reform it; the continuing settlement, especially in the first half of the period, of North America by the British and French in particular; the struggle for power in India between France and Britain/Britain and the Nawab of Bengal, and the consolidation of British dominion there by c.1760; the voyages of Captain Cook from 1768 into the 1770s exploring the east coast of Australia and claiming it for Britain (in 1770, he 'discovered' Botany Bay; by 1788, the first convicts were arriving there); the periodic but devastating famines that beset Ireland in the mid-18th Century.

Science and Industry

In Britain, perhaps the single most formative process, outside the political arena, was the rapid progress in science and engineering, hence inaugurating *The Industrial Revolution*. For example, in the mid-1760s, Joseph Priestley investigated electricity, while Henry Cavendish identified hydrogen and analysed air; in 1772, Daniel Rutherford isolated nitrogen; two years later, Priestley did the same for oxygen and also discovered ammonia. As early as 1709, coke was first used to smelt iron ore; in 1759 the Carron Iron Works was established; the Bridgewater Canal opened in 1761; in 1779 the first iron bridge was completed over the River Severn at Coalbrookdale; and in 1786, the first attempts were made to use coal-gas for lighting. From the 1730s onwards, James Hargreaves, Richard Arkwright, Samuel Crompton, Edmund Cartwright and others invented spinning and weaving machines, looms and then power mills which transformed the cloth-making industries (causing great social distress and unrest), with the first steam-driven cotton

factory opening in Manchester in 1789. In the 1760s and 1770s, James Watt, Matthew Boulton and others developed steam engines, which were then used to smelt iron and drive looms; in 1720, salt-glazed pottery was first made in Staffordshire; from the 1750s, porcelain factories were established at Worcester and Burslem (Wedgwood); and in 1742, the silver-plating process was discovered in Sheffield. At the end of the period, the first flight in a hot-air balloon was made by the French Montgolfier brothers (1783) and Blanchard and Jeffries made the first Channel crossing in one two years later.

Health

Related to developments in science was a noticeable increase in concern about health: early in the period, Fahrenheit invented the mercury thermometer, and in 1742 Celsius proposed the Centigrade scale; around 1717, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu introduced inoculation against smallpox into Britain, and by 1740 it was in general use; Guy's Hospital was founded in 1722, the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, in 1730, Queen Charlotte's (Maternity) Hospital in 1739, the Middlesex Hospital in 1745, and the first mental hospital opened in London in 1751.

North American Culture

Supplementing the accelerating dissidence of the American colonies, and evidence of a growing sense of independence and self-identity, was the development of an indigenous cultural infrastructure, especially the founding of libraries and universities (Pennsylvania, Yale, Princeton, Columbia).

Society and Culture

In Europe, the period witnessed the high point of **The Enlightenment*** [see below] in the writings of Voltaire, Diderot and the French Encyclopaedists, and the flowering of classical music and opera in the work of Handel, Bach, Haydn and Mozart. By the later part of the period, however, the proto-Romantic work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau was in reaction to it in France, as was that of the 'Sturm und Drang' movement in Germany, most particularly in the writing of Goethe, Schiller and Herder. In Britain, social and cultural narratives would include: from the late-1720s, the growth of Methodism, especially under the leadership of John Wesley; the first appearance of daily newspapers (in 1702, *The Daily Courant* was published in London; *The Times* in 1788); the widespread publication of periodicals, journals and magazines like Daniel Defoe's *Review*, Richard Steele's *The Tatler*, Steele and Joseph Addison's *The Spectator*, Eliza Haywood's *The Female Spectator* and Dr Johnson's *The Rambler*. The production of major reference works: for example, early English dictionaries appeared in 1702 and 1721, whilst Dr Johnson's was published in 1755; Ephraim Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* (not to be confused with the more famous 19th-Century *Chambers Encyclopaedia*) appeared in 1728, and early versions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in Edinburgh in 1768 and 1771; the founding, in the 1750s, of the British Museum (opens 1759); the production of new editions of Shakespeare's works. In 1709–10, the first English Copyright Act to protect writers was introduced, while in 1737, the Theatres Licensing Act established the Lord

Chamberlain's right to censor all plays. The period also witnessed, especially in the second half of it, the rapid rise of 'Grub Street', of a new kind of professional writer or 'hack' who wrote for money and therefore directly for the market, and who heralded a different kind of literary culture to the older aristocratic one based on patronage.

Arts

In the arts, Handel – based in London from c.1712 – was the principal composer of the first half of the century. In painting, William Hogarth, Thomas Gainsborough, Sir Joshua Reynolds and George Romney were the dominant figures, while the second half of the century saw the caricatures of James Gillray; the production of furniture by Thomas Chippendale and George Hepplewhite; and the **Neo-Classical*** designs of Thomas Sheraton. The architectural achievements of the period include: Sir John Vanbrugh's Blenheim Palace and Castle Howard, Yorkshire; James Gibbs's St Mary-le-Strand, St Martins-in-the-Fields, the Radcliffe Library, Oxford, and the Senate House, Cambridge; the 'Palladian' designs (i.e. based on the Classical work of the Italian Renaissance architect, Andreas Palladio) of William Kent (Kensington Palace; Horse Guards Parade, Whitehall), Lord Burlington (Burlington House), and Kent and Burlington (Chiswick House; Holkham Hall, Norfolk). The Neo-Classical* work of John Wood the Elder (the North and South Parades, Queen Square, the Circus, and Prior Park, all in Bath), John Wood the Younger (Royal Crescent and the Assembly Rooms, Bath), Robert Adam (Kedleston Hall), and Robert and William Adam (Portland Place and Lansdowne House, London; the 'Old Quad', Edinburgh University). A rather different style of architecture appeared in 1784, as work began on the orientalist Brighton Pavilion for George, Prince of Wales (later Prince Regent and then George IV; see **Regency***).

Literature

In literature, the early part of the period was dominated by the **Augustan*** writers and the members of the Tory* (see Chapter 2) 'Scriblerus Club' (founded in 1713) which included Alexander Pope, Jonathan Swift, John Arbuthnot, John Gay and Viscount Bolingbroke, while the middle of it witnessed the immense achievement of Dr Johnson, poet, novelist, lexicographer, biographer and foundational English critic. But it also saw the so-called 'Rise of the [Realist] Novel' (Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett, Laurence Sterne) – despite the presence of Aphra Behn's 30 fictional works written some 30 years before Defoe's. However, the period presently under consideration did witness the increasing prominence of women writers, and they, like the male novelists, do not always or easily fit the Augustan* or Neo-Classical* labels (Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Anne Finch, Eliza Haywood, Sarah Fielding, Clara Reeve, Anna Barbauld, Fanny Burney, Charlotte Smith, Elizabeth Inchbald, Mary Wollstonecraft). Furthermore, and once again to illustrate just how precarious any notion of exact periodisation is, it is also worth noting how early in the period the work of writers began to appear whose concern with 'Sensibility' and 'Nature' foreshadowed the **Romantic*** movement around the turn of the 18th Century. James Thomson and John Dyer published poems with 'transitional' elements in the late 1720s; Thomas Gray, Edward Young, Mark

Akenside and William Collins were all active in the mid-1740s; James Macpherson's 'Ossian' poems appeared in the early 1760s; Horace Walpole's 'Gothic' novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, was published in 1764, and Thomas Chatterton's 'Rowley' forgeries were written later in the same decade; by the 1770s, the poetry of George Crabbe and William Cowper was being published, as was Henry Mackenzie's novel, *The Man of Feeling*; and by 1789, when the present 'period' ends, unmistakably Romantic works by Robert Burns, William Blake and William Beckford (the Gothic fantasy, *Vathek*) had been produced.

3.2 GEORGIAN I

An adjective used to define the period of the reigns of the Hanoverian monarchs of Great Britain from the accession of George I in 1714 to the death of George IV in 1830. Note that this should not be confused with Georgian II*, which is the descriptor for the early years (c.1910–14) of the reign of King George V, and especially for a poetic movement, Georgian Poetry, which flourished shortly before the outbreak of the First World War. 'Georgian' is seldom used these days to describe the literature of the Hanoverian period (perhaps because of the potential confusion noted above), but it is still widely used to describe the silverware, furniture and neo-classical architecture of the period.*

3.3 THE ENLIGHTENMENT

*The name given to an intellectual movement in Europe originating during the late 17th Century, which reached its apogee by the mid-18th Century and was a fundamental influence on the American and French Revolutions. The movement was critical of traditional beliefs, superstitions and prejudices, and placed its central faith in human reason and strict scientific method. At its heart, therefore, Enlightenment thinking embraced notions of human progress, the rational perfectibility of humankind, and the universe as governed by observable laws and systematic principles. Such rationalism led, in the religious context, to anti-clericalism, deism and atheism, but it was also applied to ethical, social and political matters, seeing the state as the principal guardian of order and believing in tolerance, individualism and equality before the law. It is represented in Germany by Gotthold Lessing; in France by Voltaire, Diderot, d'Alembert and other contributors to that symptomatic monument of the French Enlightenment, the *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers* (35 vols; 1751–76); and in Britain by the empirical philosopher, [John Locke](#), the scientist and mathematician, Sir Isaac Newton, the Scottish atheist and sceptical philosopher, David Hume, the historian Edward Gibbon, and later in the century, by the economist and philosopher, Adam Smith, the political philosophers, William Godwin and Thomas Paine, and the radical feminist, Mary Wollstonecraft. Aspects of the Enlightenment cast of mind are to be found in Augustan* literature, although never comprehensively or unproblematically, but the rejection of the irrational and the distrust of feelings and the imagination common to both certainly led to the Romantic* reaction at the end of the century. While many Enlightenment ideas (e.g. reason, progress, equality, scientific truth) became the accepted foundations ('grand narratives') of Western thinking over the following two centuries, by the late 20th Century, poststructuralism, postmodernism and*

postcolonialism had challenged both the credibility of such 'universal' ideas and their Eurocentric partiality.

3.4 AUGUSTAN / AUGUSTANISM

'Augustan' is an adjective borrowed from the name given to the reign of Augustus Caesar, the first Roman Emperor (27 BC to AD 14).

[Augustus Caesar](#) restored Rome to peace, power and glory in the aftermath of a disastrous civil war and the assassination of Julius Caesar which ended the Roman republic. He beautified the city and patronised the arts, the period being exemplified in literature by the work of [Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Propertius, Tibullus and Livy](#). In its most general sense, therefore, the term implies the height of classical artistic taste and refinement.

In British literary history, its application is somewhat various in terms of the length of period it covers. The OED gives its earliest usage as 1712 in reference to Jonathan Swift: 'King Charles the Second's Reign, which may be the Augustan Age of English Poetry'; hence one version of the period would see the years following the **Restoration*** of the monarchy under Charles II [see Chapter 2] as paralleling that of Augustus Caesar – relative peace restored to the nation after the Civil War and **Interregnum*** [see Chapter 2] and a monarch who patronised the arts and sciences. This was certainly a contemporary view amongst the supporters of the Restoration, and **many literary historians still see the Augustan period as stretching from the advent of John Dryden as a major literary figure to the death of Alexander Pope (1744) and Jonathan Swift (1745). A rather more limited conception of it is signalled by Oliver Goldsmith's 'Account of the Augustan Age in England' (1759) which sees the term as applying to the literature of Queen Anne's reign (1702–14), a view sustained by Matthew Arnold in 1861, who refers to 'the Augustan [Age] of Queen Anne'.**

Further complications can be discerned in Horace Walpole's reference in 1772 to 'this our Augustan Age'; and when the term 'Augustanism' is first used (pejoratively) in 1903–4, we find the following period limits laid out: 'The period of Augustanism in English Literature – that age of acceptance which began after Milton and ended with Gray and Collins' (i.e. by the 1760s/1770s). But we should also accept, in our ongoing contest with periodisation, that Augustan principles underlie the work of Dr Johnson, that Jane Austen (1775–1817) is sometimes considered to be a 'late Augustan', and that, as noted in timeline 'narrative' **Literature** above, the transition from Neo-Classical* literature to that which promotes 'Sensibility' and evinces proto-Romantic* tendencies is apparent relatively early in the 18th Century.

Despite the above variations, the terms 'Augustan' and 'Augustanism' (in non-pejorative usage, those features of form, content and stance which are commonly found in the arts so defined) may be understood to include literary work from the later decades of the 17th Century through to the mid-18th Century, but exemplified most typically by

the writings of such 'Augustans' as Dryden, Pope, Addison, Steele, Gay and Swift. The aesthetic characteristics of Augustan literature are outlined in the following gloss on the adjective [Neo-Classical](#)*.

3.5 NEO-CLASSICAL / NEO-CLASSICISM

In the arts, the terms used to describe work which displays a revival of interest in and veneration for the classical attitudes and styles of ancient Greece and Rome, and which is influenced by and/or imitates such models in seeking to emulate their pursuit of order, clarity, harmony, grace, humanity, self-discipline and rational beauty.

In British literary history, [18th-century Neo-Classicism is effectively coterminous with Augustanism](#)*, which drew its inspiration from such works as the poems of Homer and Virgil, and the critical theory of Aristotle's *Poetics* and Horace's *Ars Poetica*. Symptomatically, John Dryden translated Virgil and Juvenal, and Alexander Pope, Homer, whilst legislative criticism became an important strategy in promoting literary theory and practice: Dryden, Pope, Jonathan Swift, Thomas Rhymer and John Dennis are significant names in this context, with Pope laying out the main tenets of English Neo-Classicism in his poem, [Essay on Criticism](#) (itself drawing heavily on the French critic [Nicolas Boileau's L'Art poétique of 1674](#)). Augustan Neo-Classicism is characterised by: a tendency to be conservative in its view that contemporary culture was necessarily inferior to that of the classical past (witness the fierce debate between the 'Ancients' and the 'Moderns' throughout the 1690s and 1700s, of which Swift's satirical essay [The Battle of the Books](#) is the best-known contribution in English); by valuing and admiring the 'proprieties': regularity and simplicity of form, order and proportion, elegance and polished wit; by encouraging emotional restraint and rating most highly art which displayed technical mastery.

Notions of [decorum](#) lie at the heart of this, since the strict observation of formal conventions implies that the concept of what is fitting – both in art and in life – is premised on a sense of established or accepted values (as articulated in Pope's synoptic line from the *Essay on Man*, 'One truth is clear, WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT'). In literary practice, decorum regulated distinctions between genres and determined which kinds of style and subject were in keeping with each other: for example, epic required an elevated style to match the heroic proportions of character and action, while a low style was suitable for comedy, in which ignoble vices and follies were ridiculed (Shakespeare's mingling of genres thus produced problems for Neo-Classical editors and critics; and it is also to the point here that Henry Fielding, in wryly claiming some status for the new, 'low' genre of the novel form, described his own *Joseph Andrews* as 'a comic epic poem in prose'). Such attitudes also explain the prevalence of [Augustan 'poetic diction'](#) (the use of stylised and [stock epithets, classical references, artificial tropes](#), etc. to 'heighten' the language of poetry), and [Augustanism's appropriation of classical genres and forms](#) such as epic, tragedy, comedy, satire, polemic, the eclogue, the elegy, the epistle, the fable, the

alexandrine, the heroic couplet and the ode. Satire, in particular, is a characteristic mode in high Augustan literature, with its ferocious ridiculing of deviation from accepted norms, of human folly and pretension; its deployment of parody (in, for example, Swift's *A Tale of a Tub* and *A Modest Proposal*) and mock-epic (especially in Dryden's and Pope's deflationary heroic couplets, but also in Fielding's use of bathos in *Tom Jones*). In addition, neo-classical principles, first exemplified in the work of the 17th-century French dramatists, Racine and Corneille, also underpin the dramatic criticism and heroic tragedies of Dryden, Thomas Otway's tragedies, *Alcibiades* (1675) and *Titus and Berenice* (1676; based on Racine), and Joseph Addison's tragedy, *Cato* (1713).

Sources:

Adapted from: Widdowson, Peter. *The Palgrave Guide to English Literature and Its Contexts: 1500-2000*. Macmillan International Higher Education, 2004.

The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment's emphasis on reason shaped philosophical, political and scientific discourse from the late 17th to the early 19th century. Matthew White traces the Enlightenment back to its roots in the aftermath of the Civil War, and forward to its effects on the present day.

The Enlightenment – the great ‘Age of Reason’ – is defined as the period of rigorous scientific, political and philosophical discourse that characterised European society during the ‘long’ 18th century: from the late 17th century to the ending of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. This was a period of huge change in thought and reason, which (in the words of historian Roy Porter) was ‘decisive in the making of modernity’.^[1] Centuries of custom and tradition were brushed aside in favour of exploration, individualism, tolerance and scientific endeavour, which, in tandem with developments in industry and politics, witnessed the emergence of the ‘modern world’.

Porcelain figure of John Wilkes, holding the Bill of Rights and a scroll inscribed ‘Magna Carta’



[View images from this item \(1\)](#)

This Derby porcelain figurine of the radical politician John Wilkes poses nonchalantly among symbols of English liberty. The plinth upon which he leans has two scrolls, one inscribed ‘Magna Carta’ and the other ‘Bill of Rights’; at his feet a cherub holds a liberty cap and a treatise on government by John Locke.

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The emergence of ‘reason’

The roots of the Enlightenment can be found in the turmoil of the [English Civil Wars](#). With the re-establishment of a largely unchanged autocratic monarchy, first with the restoration of [Charles II](#) in 1660 and then the [ascendancy of James II](#) in 1685, leading political thinkers began to reappraise how society and politics could (and should) be better structured. Movements for political change resulted in the Glorious Revolution of 1688/89, when William and Mary were installed on the throne as part of the new Protestant settlement.

The Bill of Rights



[View images from this item \(3\)](#)

The Bill of Rights, signed by [William and Mary](#) in February 1689, stated that it was illegal for the Crown to suspend or dispense with the law, to levy money without parliamentary assent, or to raise an army in peacetime, and insisted on due process in criminal trials. [Usage terms](#) © Parliamentary Archives, London HL/PO/JO/10/1/1430, membrs. 2-3
[Held by](#)© Parliamentary Archives, London HL/PO/JO/10/1/1430, membrs. 2-3

The ancient civilisations of Greece and Rome were revered by enlightened thinkers, who viewed these communities as potential models for how modern society could be organised.^[2] Many commentators of the late 17th century were eager to achieve a clean break from what they saw as centuries of political tyranny, in favour of personal freedoms and happiness centred on the individual. Chief among these thinkers was philosopher and physician [John Locke](#), whose [Two Treatises of Government](#) (published in 1689) advocated a separation of church and state, religious toleration, the right to property ownership and a contractual obligation on governments to recognise the innate 'rights' of the people.

Locke believed that reason and human consciousness were the gateways to contentment and liberty, and he demolished the notion that human knowledge was somehow pre-programmed and mystical. Locke's ideas reflected the earlier but equally influential works of Thomas Hobbes, which similarly advocated new social contracts between the state and civil society as the key to unlocking personal happiness for all.

Hobbes's *Leviathan*



[View images from this item \(1\)](#)

Published in 1651, Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* helped shape Western political thinking.
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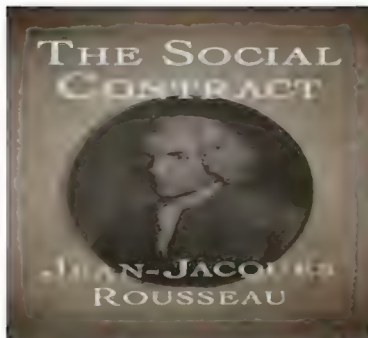
Concurrent movements for political change also emerged in France during the early years of the 18th century. The writings of [Denis Diderot](#), for example, linked reason with the maintenance of virtue and its ability to check potentially destructive human passions. Similarly, the profoundly influential works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that man was born free and rational, but was enslaved by the constraints imposed on society by governments. True political sovereignty, he argued, always remained in the hands of the people if the rule of law was properly maintained by a democratically endorsed government: a radical political philosophy that came to influence revolutionary movements in [France](#) and [America](#) later in the century.

The Social Contract by Jean-Jacques Rousseau

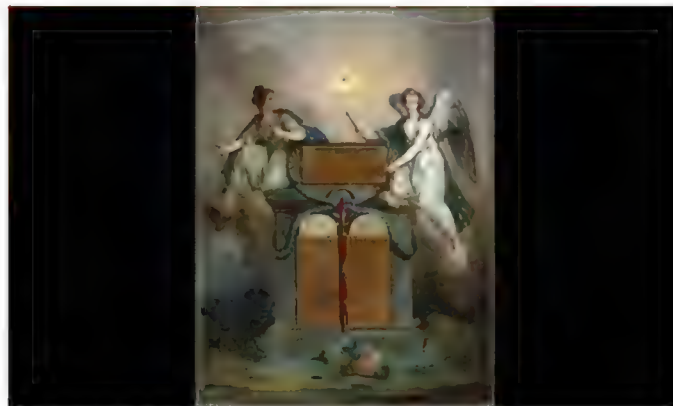
[View images from this item \(2\)](#)

Frontispiece with a portrait of the author in the 1895 edition of Rousseau's *The Social Contract*, first published in 1762.

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The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen



View images from this item (1)

On 26 August 1789, the French National Constituent Assembly issued the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* (*Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen*) which defined individual and collective rights at the time of the French Revolution. Painted by the artist Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier (1738–1826), this depiction of the *Déclaration* celebrates these rights as a crowning achievement of the French Revolution.

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Scientific revolution

These new enlightened views of the world were also encapsulated in the explosion of scientific endeavour that occurred during the 18th century. With the rapid expansion of print culture from around 1700, and increasing levels of literacy, details of experimentation and discovery were eagerly consumed by the reading public.

Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World*



View images from this item (9)

Cavendish's ground-breaking proto-novel wove original scientific theories into a fictional narrative.

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This growth of 'natural philosophy' (the term 'science' was only coined later in the 18th century) was underpinned by the application of rational thought and reason to scientific enquiry; first espoused by [Francis Bacon](#) in the early 1600s, this approach built on the earlier work of [Copernicus](#) and [Galileo](#) dating from the [medieval period](#). Scientific experimentation (with instrumentation) was used to shed new light on nature and to challenge superstitious interpretations of the living world, much of which had been deduced from uncritical readings of historical texts.

Copernicus' celestial spheres



View images from this item (2)

First edition of *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* (1543), in which Copernicus argued that the positions of the stars and planetary orbits could be better explained by the sun being at the centre of the universe with the planets rotating around it in a circular motion, as shown in this iconic diagram.

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Galileo's sunspot letters



View images from this item (2)

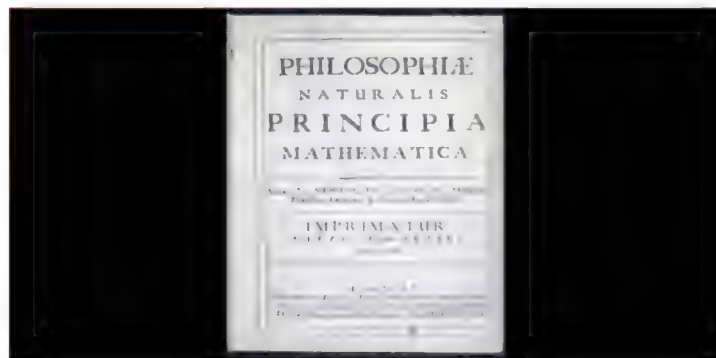
These letters record astronomical observations made by the Italian physicist and astronomer Galileo Galilei in 1612.

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At the forefront of the scientific revolution stood Sir Isaac Newton, whose achievements in mathematics and physics revolutionised the contemporary view of the natural world. Born in 1643, Newton demonstrated a talent for mathematical theory at Trinity College,

Cambridge, where his astonishingly precocious abilities led to his appointment as professor of mathematics at the age of just 26. Among Newton's weighty catalogue of investigations were his treatises on optics, gravitational forces and mechanics (most famously encapsulated in his *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, first published in 1687), all grounded in empirical experimentation as a way to demystify the physical world.

Newton's *Principia Mathematica*



View images from this item (1)

Title page of the first edition of Newton's *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (in Latin).

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The discoveries of Sir Isaac Newton were complemented by those of a host of equally dazzling mathematicians, astronomers, chemists and physicists (Robert Hooke and Robert Boyle, for example), many of whom were members of the Royal Society (founded in 1660, and active today). Yet it was Newton's empirical approach to science that remained particularly influential. By embarking on purely rational and mathematical investigations, Newton was able to show that the natural world was 'amenable to observations and experiment', engendering a feeling among the scientific community that 'Nature had finally been fathomed'.^[3]

***Micrographia* by Robert Hooke, 1665**



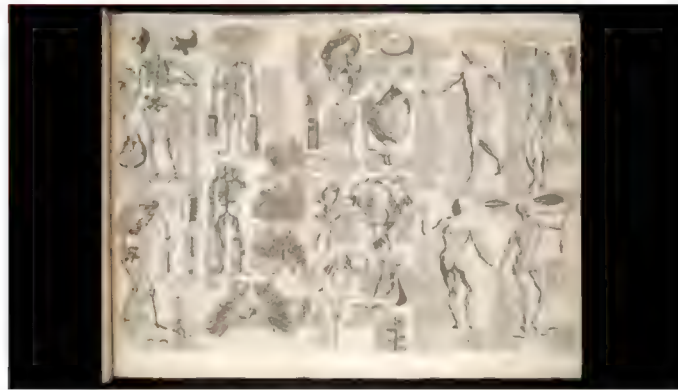
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Hooke's *Micrographia* was the first important work on microscopy, the study of minute objects through a microscope.

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The pursuit of rational scientific knowledge was never the preserve of an educated elite. As well as fertilising a huge trade in published books and pamphlets, scientific investigation created a buoyant industry in scientific instruments, many of which were relatively inexpensive to buy and therefore available to the general public. Manufacturers of telescopes, microscopes, barometers, air pumps and thermometers prospered during the 18th century, particularly after 1750 when the names of famous scientific experimenters became household names: Benjamin Franklin, Joseph Priestley, William Herschel and [Sir Joseph Banks](#), for example.

Ephraim Chambers's *Cyclopaedia*, 1741



View images from this item (13)

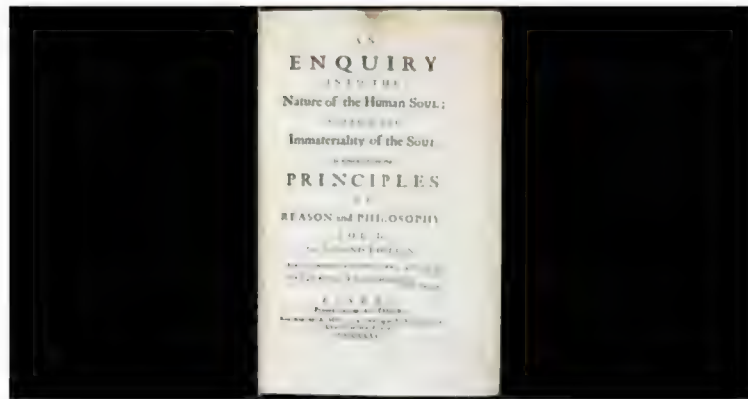
Encyclopaedias, grammars and dictionaries became something of a craze in this period, helping to demystify the world in empirical terms. This huge fold-out page contains carefully labelled illustrations of anatomised human bodies.

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Secularisation and the impact on religion

Religion and personal faith were also subject to the tides of reason evident during the 18th century. Personal judgements on matters of belief were actively debated during the period, leading to scepticism, if not bold atheism, among an enlightened elite.

An enquiry into the nature of the human soul



[View images from this item \(4\)](#)

The author, Andrew Baxter argues that all matter is inherently inactive, and that the soul and an omnipotent divine spirit are the animating principles of all life. In making this argument, Baxter is rejecting the beliefs of more atheistic and materialist thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes and Baruch Spinoza.

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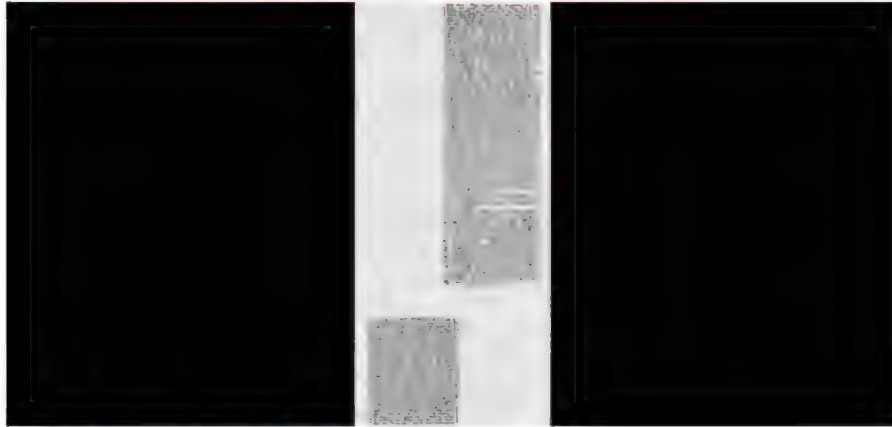
These new views on religion led to increasing fears among the clergy that the Enlightenment was ungodly and thus harmful to the moral well-being of an increasingly secular society. With church attendance in steady decline throughout the 1700s, evidence of increasing agnosticism (the belief that true knowledge of God could never be fully gained) and a rejection of some scriptural teachings was close at hand. Distinct anti-clericalism (the criticism of church ministers and rejection of religious authority) also emerged in some circles, whipped up by the musings of 'deist' writers such as Voltaire, who argued that God's influence on the world was minimal and revealed only by one's own personal experience of nature.

Though certainly a challenge to accepted religious beliefs, the impulse of reason was considered by other contemporary observers to be a complement rather than a threat to spiritual orthodoxy: a means by which (in the words of John Locke) the true meaning of Scripture could be unlocked and 'understood in the plain, direct meaning of the words and phrases'.^[4] Though difficult to measure or quantify, Locke believed that 'rational religion' based on personal experience and reflection could nevertheless still operate as a useful moral compass in the modern age.

New personal freedoms within the orbit of faith were extended to the relationship between the Church and state. In England, the recognition of dissenting religions was formalised by legislation, such as the 1689 Act of Toleration which permitted freedom of worship to Nonconformists (albeit qualified by allegiances to the Crown). Later, political emancipation for Roman Catholics – who were allowed new property rights – also reflected an enlightened impulse among the political elite: such measures sometimes created violent responses from working people. In 1780, for example, London was convulsed by a week of rioting in response to further freedoms granted to Catholics: a

sign, perhaps, of how the enlightened thinking of politicians could diverge sharply from the sentiments of the humble poor.

Newspaper report of the Gordon riots, 1780



[View images from this item \(1\)](#)

The Gordon Riots of June 1780 were in response to legislation passed permitting Catholics greater freedom in society (such as being allowed to join the Army). The riots were so bad that 15,000 troops were deployed to quell the disturbances and nearly 300 rioters were shot dead by soldiers.

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First edition of the *Letters of the late Ignatius Sancho, an African*, 1782



[View images from this item \(25\)](#)

From his shop in Westminster, Ignatius Sancho witnessed 'the burnings and devastations' of the Gordon Riots. He described the 'ridiculous confusion' in a series of letters, dated 6–9 June 1780.

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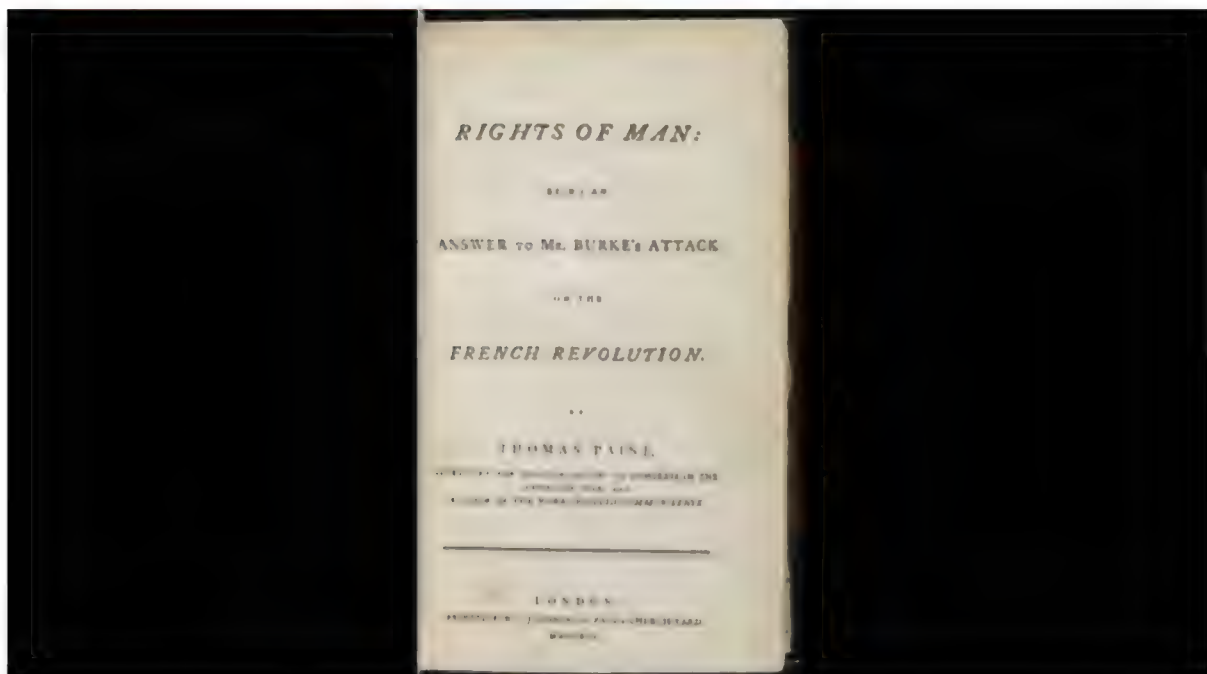
Political freedoms, contracts and rights

Public debates about what qualified as the best forms of government were heavily influenced by enlightened ideals, most notably Rousseau's and Diderot's notions of

egalitarian freedom and the '[social contract](#)'. By the end of the 18th century most European nations harboured movements calling for political reform, inspired by radical enlightened ideals which advocated clean breaks from tyranny, monarchy and absolutism.

Late 18th-century radicals were especially inspired by the writings of [Thomas Paine](#), whose influence on revolutionary politics was felt in both America and France. Born into humble beginnings in England in 1737, by the 1770s Paine had arrived in America where he began agitating for revolution. Paine's most radical works, *The Rights of Man* and later *The Age of Reason* (both successful best-sellers in Europe), drew extensively on Rousseau's notions of the social contract. Paine reserved particular criticism for the hereditary privileges of ruling elites, whose power over the people, he believed, was only ever supported through simple historical tradition and the passive acceptance of the social order among the common people.

Rights of Man by Thomas Paine



View images from this item (18)

The Rights of Man (1791) was in part a defence of the French Revolution, and was thus perceived as an attack on the monarchy in Britain.

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Similarly, German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) pointed towards the 'laziness and Cowardice' of the people to explain why 'a large part of mankind gladly remain minors all their lives', and spoke of reasoned knowledge gained from sensual experience as a means of achieving genuine freedom and equality.^[5]

Though grounded in a sense of outrage at social and economic injustice, the political revolutions of both [America](#) (1765 to 1783) and [France](#) (1789 to 1799) can thus be fairly judged to have been driven by enlightened political dogma, which criticised [despotic monarchies](#) as acutely incompatible with the ideals of democracy, equality under the rule of law and the rights to property ownership.^[6] These new movements for political reform argued in favour of protecting certain inalienable natural rights that some enlightened thinkers believed were innate in all men (though [rarely in women](#) as well): in the freedom of speech and protection from arbitrary arrest, for example, later enshrined in the American Constitution.

An Enquiry concerning Political Justice



[View images from this item \(3\)](#)

[William Godwin's major text, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, explored the idea of dismantling the power of the state in the international context of the French Revolution. Usage terms Public Domain](#)

However, for other observers (particularly in Britain) the [violent extremes of the French Revolution](#) proved incompatible with enlightened thought. Many saw the extremes of revolution as a counterpoint to any true notion of 'reason'. British MP Edmund Burke, for example, wrote critically of the 'fury, outrage and insult' he saw embedded in events across the Channel, and urged restraint among Britain's own enlightened political radicals.^[7]

Reflections on the Revolution in France by Edmund Burke



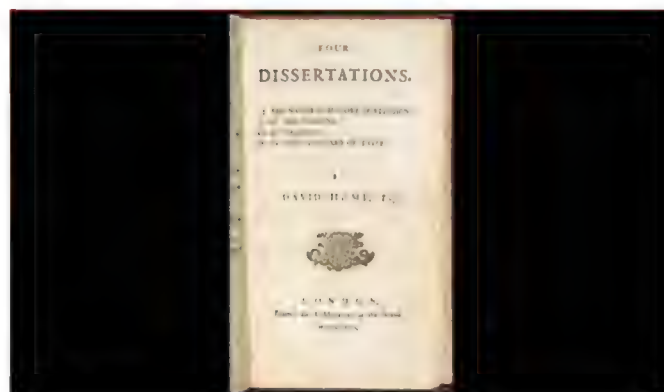
[View images from this item \(2\)](#)

First edition (1790) of Burke's observations and reactions to the French Revolution.

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Political philosopher David Hume also warned of the dangers he perceived in the headlong pursuit of liberty for all. An ill-educated and ignorant crowd, argued Hume, was in danger of running into violence and anarchy if a stable framework of government was not maintained through the consent of the people and strong rule of law.^[8] Governments, he believed, could offer a benign presence in people's lives only when moderated by popular support, and he therefore offered the extension of the franchise as a counterbalance to the strong authority of the state.

Four Dissertations by Enlightenment philosopher David Hume



[View images from this item \(6\)](#)

David Hume was an 18th-century Scottish philosopher, known for his empiricism and scepticism. He was a major figure in the Scottish Enlightenment.

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The end of the Enlightenment?

The outcomes of the Enlightenment were thus far-reaching and, indeed, revolutionary. By the early 1800s a new 'public sphere' of political debate was evident in European society, having emerged first in the [culture of coffee-houses](#) and later fuelled by an explosion of books, magazines, pamphlets and newspapers (the new 'Augustan' age of poetry and prose was coined at the same time). Secular science and invention, fertilised by a spirit of enquiry and discovery, also became the hallmark of modern society, which in turn propelled the pace of [18th-century industrialisation](#) and economic growth.

Individualism – the personal freedoms celebrated by Locke, Hume, [Adam Smith](#), Voltaire and Kant – became part of the web of modern society that trickled down into 19th-century notions of independence, self-help and liberalism. Representative government on behalf of the people was enshrined in new constitutional arrangements, characterised by the slow march towards [universal suffrage](#) in the 1900s.

Photograph of Annie Kenney and Christabel Pankhurst



[View images from this item \(1\)](#)

This photograph shows suffragettes Annie Kenney and Christabel Pankhurst holding a 'Votes for Women' placard.

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Evidence of the Enlightenment thus remains with us today: in our notions of free speech, our secular yet religiously tolerant societies, in science, the arts and literature: all legacies

of a profound movement for change that transformed the nature of society forever.

Notes

[1] Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London, 2001), p. 3.

[2] Porter, *Enlightenment*, p. 34.

[3] Porter, *Enlightenment*, p. 142.

[4] John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (London, 1695), p. 2.

[5] Immanuel Kant, 'What is Enlightenment', quoted in Margaret C Jacob, *The Enlightenment: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston, 2001), p. 203.

[6] Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 110.

[7] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), quoted in David Williams, (ed.), *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1999) p. 516.

[8] Williams, *The Enlightenment*, p. 26.

Source:

Adapted from:

Matthew White, "Language and Ideas, Politics and Religion," 21 June, 2018.
<https://www.bl.uk/restoration-18th-century-literature/articles/the-enlightenment>

Part II

The Romantic Period



The Romantic Period



Background & History

Another short but eventful period, the years 1790 to 1829 see the continuation of the **Hanoverian*** monarchy: first by George III, then – as George's insanity becomes permanent – by his son as Prince Regent (**The Regency*²**, 1811–20), who accedes to the throne as [George IV](#) in 1820 (his death in 1830, and the ensuing succession). But the period is most emphatically marked by a Europe ripped apart by the **French Revolutionary Wars**, the rise to pan-European power of Napoleon Bonaparte, and the subsequent [Napoleonic Wars](#), ending only with Napoleon's final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. It also witnesses the high point of the European **Romantic*** movement in the arts. In the British context, the later part of the period experiences developments in political, religious and social reform which will become one of the hallmarks of the **Victorian*** period to follow.

Background & Literature

Romanticism is the term applied to the literary and artistic movement that took place between 1785 and 1832 in Western Europe. Occurring in the context of the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, and the social, political, and economic changes that occurred following the [Augustan Age](#), Romanticism moved away from an emphasis on the importance of an empirical, material worldview and looked to the imagination and nature as sources of insight. Writers expressed a great reverence for nature and believed that intuition, emotion, and imagination were more instructive than empiricism and reason. The Romantic Period overthrew the values instilled during the Augustan Age and strove to sever itself from the rigid writing styles of the ancient, classical examples of

² As a noun with the direct article, 'The Regency' defines the period in British history from 1811 to 1820 when George III's insanity became so severe that his eldest son, George, the Prince of Wales (afterwards George IV), was appointed Prince Regent.

Virgil, Horace, and Homer. Instead, poets and authors were inspired to write in their own individual and creative voices.

The Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution was a transformation for Britain in the 18th century. In terms of economic growth and technological advances, England was the first country to become industrialized. Machines were changing the agricultural economy of the past that relied on manual labor to this new industrial economy. It led to larger cities, new products, and a better manufacturing process. The growing population, and consequently the growing literacy rate, would also prove to create a huge change in communication as well as politics, technology, religion and society in general.

The French Revolution

Beginning in 1789 and ending in 1799 the French Revolution played a crucial role in transforming the political and social systems in France. During the revolution, France changed from a monarchy to a republic of free citizens. This Drastic move not only changed the political and social systems, but it also has a huge impact on the literary world. Writers like William Blake saw the revolution as society falling back into perfection where people could express their own opinions.

The Enclosure Acts

Between 1760-1820, agricultural land in Britain was consolidated and made more compact. "Wasteful" land was then taken from Lords and villagers in order to increase the efficiency of farming, to increase the productivity of the land, and ultimately to increase profits. These Enclosure Acts had many effects on English society, including many Romantic writers.

Cultural and Literary Contexts

- [Transitions from Augustan Literature to the Romantics](#)

The Transition between the Augustan period and the Romantic period was a drastic shift in literary ideals. The Augustans followed the works of former classical writers, such as Horace, Virgil, and Homer. To them this was the proper and only way to write. They followed the views of Aristotle, which led them to an empirical way of teaching.

The beginning of the romantic period was marked by the writers, William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge. In 1798, when they published *Lyrical Ballads*. This started the idea that it was intuition within the writer that made them a good poet. The romantics saw writers to be similar to the common man, but with a higher sense of the natural world. They threw out the manuals and empirical way of teaching that was once set in place by the Augustan writers and found that using imagination and deep thought, one could find the truth in the world.

Some characteristics of Augustan poetry are:

- response against rival authors
- the concept of individualism versus society
- the imitation of the classics
- politics and social issues
- satire and irony
- empiricism
- comedy

Some characteristics of Romantic poetry are:

- prominent role of the poet
- the importance of the imagination nature
- the use of emotion
- ordinary subjects
- interest in the spiritual or supernatural

[The Coleridge-Wordsworth Friendship](#)

In a chance meeting that would change the course of poetic history, Samuel Taylor Coleridge made the acquaintance of William Wordsworth and his sister, Dorothy, in Somerset in 1795. The two became immediate friends. Upon meeting Wordsworth, Coleridge decided to move to Grasmere to be in close proximity to his fellow poet. During this time, Wordsworth and Coleridge greatly influenced, criticized and inspired each other's poetry. In 1798, the two poets joined together to publish the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, a collection of poems that is considered by many to be the definitive starting point of the Romantic Era. Over the course of their collaboration, the second edition followed suit in 1800. Their mutual friend Robert Southey, who was also a poet, worked with them and the trio became known as the "Lake Poets." In this page, we will more deeply explore the relationship between these two Romantic poets and the people, like Southey, who shaped their lives and their poetry while they lived in Grasmere. Not only

did Wordsworth and Coleridge have similar poetic interests, but the two developed a deep and lasting friendship that was able to withstand the trials of their drug addiction, bouts of depression and mutual artistic criticism.

Lyrical Ballads

Coleridge and Wordsworth famous collaboration, *Lyrical Ballads*, was first published in 1798 and is considered by many as the starting point for the Romantic Era in literature. Groundbreaking and unique, it changed the way English literature was read. In its original form, *Lyrical Ballads* included classics such as Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancyent Mariner" and Wordsworth's "Lines written above Tintern Abbey." These poems, with their revolutionary views of nature and their new definition of the role of the poet, are now used as quintessential examples for defining the Romantic period. While the first edition was published in 1798, Wordsworth later added more of his poetry and a preface and re-published the work in 1800.

While many modern critics focus on the artistic and intellectual strains that existed between Wordsworth and Coleridge during the creation of *Lyrical Ballads*, one must not let these ideas overshadow the great impact this work had in the world of poetry. At the time of its publication, Coleridge was already enjoying success as a writer. He did not need to worry about his income as he, by this time, had agents willing to publish any poetry or prose that he submitted. Wordsworth's success as a poet, on the other hand, depended very greatly on *Lyrical Ballads*. Only after the publication of this work was Wordsworth able to advance his reputation as a respected poet.

In attempting to discern which poet's voice was more prominent in *Lyrical Ballads*, it is impossible to simply count whose poems outnumber the other's. To understand this work, the reader must keep in mind that while one poet's name is accredited to each poem, every piece of writing is a product of their intellectual partnership. Coleridge said himself of Wordsworth's Preface, that the poem, "arose so out of Conversations, so frequent, that with few exceptions we could scarcely... say which [poet] started any particular thought." Just as Coleridge claims to have a great part in adding ideas to Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, it is also on record that Wordsworth contributed to part of Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancyent Mariner."

The records of their poetic partnership have been preserved thanks to their main copyist, Dorothy Wordsworth. Along with Sarah Hutchinson, Dorothy hand-copied the poems of Coleridge and her brother Wordsworth and documented their experiences in their journals. If not for these women, the original version, and in some cases the only existing version, of many poems would never be available to modern readers.

Romantic Authors

- William Wordsworth
- William Blake
- Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- Percy Bysshe Shelley
- John Keats
- Lord Byron
- Jane Austen
- Mary Shelley
- John Clare
- William Hazlitt

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10 Key Characteristics of Romanticism in Literature³

Understanding the characteristics of Romanticism in literature can help you become a better reader, and it can give you a leg up on literary essays and discussions. This period in literary history is fascinating and dramatic, and once you know the telltale signs, you'll be able to identify work that typifies it.

What Is Romanticism in Literature?

Popular in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Romanticism was a literary movement that emphasized nature and the importance of emotion and artistic freedom. In many ways, writers of this era were rebelling against the attempt to explain the world and human nature through science and the lens of the Industrial Revolution. In Romanticism, emotion is much more powerful than rational thought.

What Are the Characteristics of Romanticism in Literature?

Although literary Romanticism occurred from about 1790 through 1850, not all writers of this period worked in this style. There are certain characteristics that make a piece of literature part of the Romantic movement. You won't find every characteristic present in every piece of Romantic literature; however, you will usually find that writing from this period has several of the key characteristics.

1. Glorification of Nature

Nature, in all its unbound glory, plays a huge role in Romantic literature. Nature, sometimes seen as the opposite of the rational, is a powerful symbol in work from this era. Romantic poets and writers give personal, deep descriptions of nature and its wild and powerful qualities.

Natural elements also work as symbols for the unfettered emotions of the poet or writer, as in the final stanza of "[To Autumn](#)" by [John Keats](#). Keats was aware that he was dying of consumption throughout much of his short life and career, and his celebration of autumn symbolizes the beauty in the ephemeral.

³ <https://examples.yourdictionary.com/10-key-characteristics-of-romanticism-in-literature.html>

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, Where are they?

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—

While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,

And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn

Among the river shallows, borne aloft

Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;

Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft

The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;

And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

2. Awareness and Acceptance of Emotions

A focus on emotion is a key characteristic of nearly all writing from the Romantic period. When you read work of this period, you'll see feelings described in all forms, including romantic and filial love, fear, sorrow, loneliness, and more. This focus on emotion offered a counterpoint to the rational, and it also made Romantic poetry and prose extremely readable and relatable.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* offers a perfect example of this characteristic of Romanticism. Here, Frankenstein's monster shows great self-awareness of his feelings and offers a vivid emotional description full of anger and sadness.

I continued for the remainder of the day in my hovel in a state of utter and stupid despair. My protectors had departed and had broken the only link that held me to the world. For the first time the feelings of revenge and hatred filled my bosom, and I did not strive to control them, but allowing myself to be borne away by the stream, I bent my mind towards injury and death. When I thought of my friends, of the mild voice of De Lacey, the gentle eyes of Agatha, and the exquisite beauty of the Arabian, these thoughts vanished and a gush of tears somewhat soothed me. But again when I reflected that they had spurned and deserted me, anger returned, a rage of anger, and unable to injure anything human, I turned my fury towards inanimate objects. As night advanced I placed a variety

of combustibles around the cottage, and after having destroyed every vestige of cultivation in the garden, I waited with forced impatience until the moon had sunk to commence my operations.

3. Celebration of Artistic Creativity and Imagination

In contrast to the previous generations' focus on reason, writers of the Romantic movement explored the importance of imagination and the creative impulse. Romantic poets and prose writers celebrated the power of imagination and the creative process, as well as the artistic viewpoint. They believed that artists and writers looked at the world differently, and they celebrated that vision in their work.

You can see this in [William Wordsworth](#)'s poem, "[The Prelude](#)."

Imagination—here the Power so called
Through sad incompetence of human speech,
That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss
Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps,
At once, some lonely traveller. I was lost;
Halted without an effort to break through;
But to my conscious soul I now can say—
"I recognise thy glory:" in such strength
Of usurpation, when the light of sense
Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
The invisible world....

4. Emphasis on Aesthetic Beauty

Romantic literature also explores the theme of [aesthetic](#) beauty, not just of nature but of people as well. This was especially true with descriptions of female beauty. Writers praised women of the Romantic era for their natural loveliness, rather than anything artificial or constrained.

A classic example of this characteristic is [George Gordon, or Lord Byron](#)'s, poem "[She Walks in Beauty](#)."

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

5. Themes of Solitude

Writers of the Romantic era believed that creative inspiration came from solitary exploration. They celebrated the feeling of being alone, whether that meant loneliness or a much-needed quiet space to think and create.

You'll see solitary themes in many literary works from this period, including in this excerpt from [Samuel Taylor Coleridge](#)'s poem "[Frost at Midnight](#)."

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owlet's cry
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully ...

6. Focus on Exoticism and History

Romantic-era literature often has a distinct focus on exotic locations and events or items from history. Poems and prose touch on antiques and the gifts of ancient cultures around the world, and far-away locations provide the setting for some literary works of this era.

One great example is [Percy Byssche Shelley](#)'s poem "[Ozymandias](#)."

I met a traveler from an antique land,
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read

7. Spiritual and Supernatural Elements

The writers of the Romantic era did not turn away from the darker side of emotion and the mysteries of the supernatural. They explored the contrast between life and death. Many pieces have [Gothic motifs](#), such as manor houses in disrepair, dark and stormy nights, and more.

Some of the supernatural elements serve as symbols for emotions of guilt, depression, and other darker feelings, as you can see in this excerpt from [The Fall of the House of Usher](#) by [Edgar Allan Poe](#).

I learned, moreover, at intervals, and through broken and equivocal hints, another singular feature of his mental condition. He was enchained by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted, and whence, for many years, he had never ventured forth --in regard to an influence whose supposititious force was conveyed in terms too shadowy here to be re-stated --an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion, had, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit--an effect which the physique of the gray walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had, at length, brought about upon the morale of his existence.

8. Vivid Sensory Descriptions

Another essential characteristic of nearly all Romantic-era literature is vivid sensory descriptions. The poems and prose of this period include [examples of simile](#) and metaphor, as well as visual imagery and other sensory details. Poets and other writers went beyond simply telling about things and instead gave the information readers need to feel and taste and touch the objects and surroundings in Romantic-era writing.

Wordsworth uses vivid descriptions, including similes and metaphors, in his famous poem, "[I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud](#)."

I wandered lonely as a cloud

That floats on high o'er vales and hills,

When all at once I saw a crowd,

A host, of golden daffodils;

Beside the lake, beneath the trees,

Fluttering and dancing in the breeze ...

9. Use of Personification

Romantic poets and prose writers also used [personification](#) in their work. You can see [examples of personification](#) of everything from birds and animals to natural events or aspects. These works even personify feelings like love or states like death.

You can see Romantic personification in the work of the famous naturalist and writer, Karl von Martius. Here is an excerpt about the trees of the Amazon from his book [Flora Brasiliensis](#).

I am impelled by some inner urge to tell you, gentle reader, these thoughts of my mind, since I am presenting to your eyes a picture of those most ancient trees which I once saw beside the Amazon River. Even today, after many years have gone by, I feel myself struck by the appearance of those giants of great age, in the same way as by the face of some giant human being. Even today those trees speak to me and fill my spirit with a certain pious fear, even today they excite in my breast that silent wonder with which my spirit was held at that time. This wonder is like a broad and deep river; the thoughts of the human mind are its waves; not all feelings of the heart are to be expressed with words....

10. Focus on the Self and Autobiography

Many works of Romantic-era literature are deeply personal, and they often explore the self of the writer. You'll see [autobiographical](#) influences in poems and prose of the period. One characteristic of this movement was the importance placed on feelings and creativity, and the source of much of this emotional and artistic work was the background and real-life surroundings of the writer. This self-focus preceded confessional poetry of the mid-1900s, but you can see its profound influence on that movement.

One key example of Romantic autobiography is [Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*](#). In this work, he endeavored to create an unvarnished look at his own upbringing and life.

I have begun on a work which is without precedent, whose accomplishment will have no imitator. I propose to set before my fellow-mortals a man in all the truth of nature; and this man shall be myself.

I have studied mankind and know my heart; I am not made like any one I have been acquainted with, perhaps like no one in existence; if not better, I at least claim originality, and whether Nature has acted rightly or wrongly in destroying the mold in which she cast me, can only be decided after I have been read.

Key Poetic Forms of Romanticism

If you are studying poetry of the Romantic era, it's helpful to know the forms that were popular during this time. These included odes, sonnets and lyrics. Take a look at [examples of odes](#) by Romantic poets like Keats, as well as [sonnet examples](#) by the likes of Percy Shelley. Understanding these poetic forms and their relationship to Romanticism will give you a deeper appreciation of this work.

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Part III

Questions

The Course Questions

Part I

Neoclassical Age

- What is the Restoration period in England?
- Why called by that name?
- What is the difference between metaphysical and Cavalier poetry?
- Who is the father of Cavalier poetry?
- Who are called Metaphysical poets?
- What is a literary conceit?
- Is to daffodils a cavalier poem?
- What is Caroline age?
- When was the cavalier period?
- What does *carpe diem* literally mean?
- What is a metaphysical conceit?
- Who belongs to graveyard school of poetry?
- What are Lake Poets most prominent works?
- What is conceit in metaphysical poetry?
- What are the characteristics of the neo classical age?
- What age is neoclassical age?
- What is the neoclassical age of reason?
- What are the 3 stages of the neoclassical period?
- What are the characteristics of Augustan age?
- Why is Augustan age called neoclassical age?
- Why is it called neoclassicism?
- What is the Neoclassical age?
- What are the dominant literary genres in the Neoclassical Age?
- What are Augustan ideals?
- What is Augustan satire?
- What is heroic poetry in literature?
- Who is known as the father of English poetry?
- Why metaphysical poets are so called?
- How would you describe pre-romantic poetry?
- What are the characteristics of metaphysical poetry?
- What works written by John Milton do you know?

[You can add another list of Questions here ...]

The Course Questions

Part II Romanticism

- What are the five characteristics of romanticism?
- What is the main idea of romanticism?
- How did romanticism influence literature?
- What did the Romantics value most?
- What was the most important musical instrument during the Romantic era?
- What does romanticism mean in art?
- How did Romanticism impact society?
- What is wrong with Romanticism?
- Who is the father of Romanticism?
- Which is the most radical opposite of romanticism?
- Why is the period of romanticism called The Age of Revolution?
- What is modern romanticism?
- What was after romanticism?
- What caused the rise of Romanticism?
- What was romanticism very short answer?
- What is the role of romanticism in national feeling?
- What are the characteristics of romanticism art? Where do we see Romanticism today?
- Why is Romanticism important to American culture?
- How were Romanticism and nationalism linked?
- What did the romantics believe?

[You can add another list of Questions here ...]

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Media

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